

Kangaroo Rats: Tracks and other signs of their presence



Kangaroo Rats are active primarily at night, and can seldom be seen in the daytime. Such activity patterns make it necessary to rely on tracks and other signs of presence in the vicinity of their colonies. When shuffling along slowly for feeding purposes, Kangaroo Rats set all four feet down on the ground (see back). At such times, the tail drags in the sand, leaving “tail drags” as shown in the photo.

When traveling, Kangaroo Rats move by hopping, in this case only the hind toes leave tracks (see back).

Another sign of Kangaroo Rat presence are little dusting spots found in the vicinity of their burrows. These are known as “dustbaths” (photo).

Kangaroo Rats make use of “dust bathing” for coat maintenance. Dust baths appear to be habitually used by the same individuals. Kangaroo Rats often use a soft dirt “plug” at the entrance of their burrow during the day. This helps to maintain proper humidity and temperature levels, as well as to exclude predators.

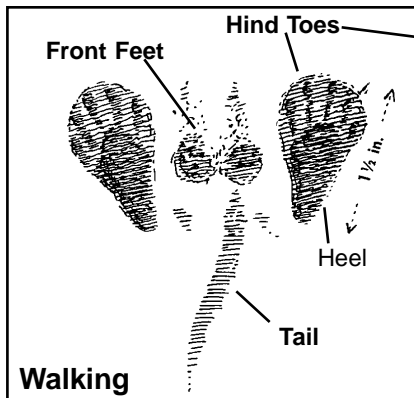


Photos: Rosalie Faubion (USBR)



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Kangaroo Rat Tracks



Kangaroo Rats as a group are differentiated into a large number of species and subspecies diversified a great deal in size. Typically, the hind foot is used as a standard for track measurement.

Hind foot measurements vary greatly between species, from 1.3 inches (Fresno K-Rat) to 2.1 inches (Giant K-Rat). Moreover, some have four toes, while others have five.

Nevertheless, they all leave the same track patterns as shown above.

